



Family Engagement Insider

Digest 2 | December 2021

Engage Families in the Social and Emotional Learning Process

With support from state education agencies, most schools and districts have embraced social and emotional learning (SEL) as a strategy to support students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral development. Developing students' SEL competencies can strengthen their capacity to manage emotions and relationships and help them deal with daily challenges in healthy and positive ways. And studies have found that students participating in SEL programs typically have more positive academic outcomes (Mahoney et al., 2018).

Ideally, the lessons of SEL should be promoted and applied every day, by caring adults, across the environments where teaching and learning happens: the school, the home, and the community. Accordingly, parents and families must become learners and promoters of SEL in partnership with educators.

So, What Exactly Is SEL?

According to **CASEL**, a leading organization in the research of SEL competencies, SEL can be defined as the following:

The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

CASEL identified the following five key competency areas for SEL:

- Self-Awareness
- 1. Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationships Skill
- Responsible Decision-Making Planning to Engage Families

The Need to Engage Families in SEL

Students spend about 80 percent of their time outside of school, therefore it is important to engage and empower families so they can promote and support SEL in the home learning environment.

To engage families in the SEL process:

- » Ensure all families understand the importance of SEL skills and how they are implemented in the school.
- » Help parents and families develop the language and skills to integrate SEL into everyday engagement and home routines.
- » Make developmentally differentiated SEL lessons an embedded process in the schools' family and community engagement plan.

Planning to Engage Families

Planning for how to engage families in SEL learning is very important. While many parents and families are organically helping their children to learn these skills, others are looking for support and guidance. When teams are planning SEL learning opportunities for the home learning environment, be prepared to answer and discuss the following questions:

1. What is the goal of SEL in the home learning environment?
2. What should families know and be able to do related to SEL?
3. In what sequence should SEL lessons and activities be shared?
4. How do we reach and engage all families, especially non-dominant families?
5. How will families' implementation of SEL be monitored?

The answers and ideas coming from the planning team in response to these questions can work as a compass to help establish a positive, asset-driven, partnership mindset.

Opportunities to Engage Families With the SEL Process

Whether they are innovative or traditional, family engagement activities and events over the course of the school year are opportune spaces to incorporate practical and scaffolded SEL learning opportunities with families:



Send families a monthly **SEL newsletter** that includes lessons, resources, and examples of how to integrate skills in the home and community environment.



Hold a **grade-level virtual learning series**, led by expert educators in the school or district, to share age-specific SEL skills and implementation tips for families.



Set up learning centers during a school's **Open House** for families to learn, explore, and discuss each of CASEL's five SEL competencies.



Facilitate SEL workshops for students and families during **Parent-Teacher Conference** days to maximize the impact of the families' visit to the school.



Offer SEL professional learning for parent leaders and those involved in **parent advisory groups** to influence and create momentum with other parents and families.

Resources

CASEL Newsletters (Monthly newsletters about SEL)

Delaware Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies Introductory Guide

(Delaware Department of Education)

Family Engagement and SEL (Usable Knowledge: Relevant Research for Today's Educators, Harvard Graduate School of Education)

For Schools—Middle & High School—Social & Emotional (SEL Resources from the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center)

References

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2021). *What is the CASEL framework?*
<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>

Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2018). An update on social and emotional learning outcome research. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100 (4), 18–23. <https://kappanonline.org/social-emotional-learning-outcome-research-mahoney-durlak-weissberg/>